

Consumer Trust in Malaysian Palm Oil: A Conceptual Framework of AI-Driven Traceability and Digital Marketing Amid Sustainability Controversies

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ABSTRACT

Consumer trust in Malaysian palm oil remained fragile due to persistent sustainability controversies, information asymmetry, and low recognition of certification labels, despite Malaysia's investment in digital traceability and sustainability communication. Malaysia's national traceability system, SKN, supported by eMSPO, SIMS, GeoSAWIT, and MSPO Trace, demonstrates ability through verifiable compliance and technical competence, yet consumer perceptions of benevolence and integrity remain underexplored in the Malaysian palm oil context. Grounded in the Ability-Benevolence-Integrity (ABI) Trust Model and Signaling Theory, this conceptual study positions AI-driven traceability and digital marketing as independent variables, and sustainability controversies as the moderating variable. Four hypotheses were derived through synthesis of recent peer-reviewed and Malaysian palm oil industry sources. The proposed framework provides a testable model for a future main study for empirical investigation. The study conceptualized the Malaysian palm oil trust gap as a trust-translation problem and provides a testable basis for future empirical investigation. The study offers theoretical, practical, and methodological contributions to Malaysian palm oil producers, certification bodies, and policymakers.

JEL Codes:

Keywords: AI-driven traceability, consumer trust, digital marketing, Malaysian palm oil, sustainability controversies.